

NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

PRESENTATION TO THE COMMONWEALTH TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
REGARDING THE SIX-YEAR TRANSPORTATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM  
(FY 2002-07)

KERRY DONLEY  
NVTC CHAIRMAN

JULY 9, 2001

MEMBERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH TRANSPORTATION BOARD:

MY NAME IS KERRY DONLEY. I AM CHAIRMAN OF THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION AND ALSO SERVE AS MAYOR OF ALEXANDRIA. I WANT TO BEGIN BY COMMENDING YOU AND THE STAFFS OF THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF RAIL AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR YOUR EFFORTS IN PROGRAMMING VERY SCARCE TRANSPORTATION FUNDS. WE ALL KNOW OUR JOBS WOULD BE MUCH EASIER IF THERE WERE SUFFICIENT STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDS FOR TRANSPORTATION AND IF WE ENJOYED A STABLE AND RELIABLE REGIONAL REVENUE SOURCE TO HELP FUND OUR TOP PRIORITY TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS.

THE CTB HAS ALREADY PROGRAMMED ABOUT \$78 MILLION OF STATE AID FOR FY 2002 TO HELP NVTC'S JURISDICTIONS PAY FOR WMATA, VRE AND LOCAL BUS SERVICES AND CAPITAL PROJECTS. HOWEVER, IF EXISTING STATE TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS WERE FULLY FUNDED, NVTC WOULD

RECEIVE AN ADDITIONAL \$64 MILLION. LOCAL GOVERNMENTS HAVE BUDGETED ABOUT \$100 MILLION OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL FUNDS FOR TRANSIT. SINCE NORTHERN VIRGINIA'S TRANSPORTATION COORDINATING COUNCIL'S REGIONAL 2020 TRANSPORTATION PLAN IS SHORT OF REQUIRED FUNDS FOR TRANSIT BY \$367 MILLION PER YEAR, AND MWCOG'S CONSTRAINED LONG RANGE PLAN UNDERFUNDS WMATA'S INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL PROGRAM BY \$50 MILLION PER YEAR, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S FAILURE TO FULLY FUND EXISTING STATE TRANSIT PROGRAMS AND TO PROVIDE A REGIONAL REVENUE SOURCE IS OF CRITICAL CONCERN.

OUR REGION'S RIDESHARING PROGRAMS WERE ALSO SERIOUSLY SHORTCHANGED THIS YEAR. THE RESULT WILL BE FEWER STAFF AND/OR REDUCED PROGRAMS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE. WE URGE YOU TO RESTORE NEEDED FUNDS FOR RIDESHARING BUT NOT BY DIPPING INTO THE TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENT FUND, SINCE THIS JUST

SQUEEZES OUT OTHER WORTHWHILE DISCRETIONARY TRANSIT AND RIDESHARING PROJECTS.

DESPITE THE ABSENCE OF SUFFICIENT STATE FUNDING, OUR RESTRICTED INVESTMENTS IN TRANSIT AND RIDESHARING ARE YIELDING BIG DIVIDENDS IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA. WE ESTIMATE THAT WELL OVER 264,000 WEEKDAY TRIPS ARE TAKEN IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA ON THE EIGHT TRANSIT SYSTEMS SERVING OUR REGION. METRORAIL IS THE NATION'S SECOND LARGEST SUBWAY AND VRE HAS ALREADY GROWN TO BE THE 11<sup>TH</sup> LARGEST COMMUTER RAIL SYSTEM.

TRANSIT CAPTURES 56 PERCENT OF THE PERSON TRIPS IN THE I-66 CORRIDOR INBOUND DURING EACH WEEKDAY MORNING PEAK; 21 PERCENT IN THE I-95/395 CORRIDOR AND 32 PERCENT IN THE ROUTE 1 CORRIDOR (ALL MEASURED AT THE BELTWAY). WITHOUT TRANSIT, 1,364 MORE LANE-MILES WOULD BE NEEDED, WHICH COULD NOT BE BUILT FOR LACK OF MONEY,

SPACE AND THE NEED TO REMAIN IN COMPLIANCE WITH CLEAN AIR STANDARDS.

WE AT NVTC ARE ESPECIALLY GRATIFIED THAT CONGESTION MITIGATION MEASURES FOR THE SPRINGFIELD INTERCHANGE ARE USING TRANSIT TO ITS FULL ADVANTAGE. VDOT REPORTS THAT VRE'S EARLY TRAIN CARRIES 385 PASSENGERS DAILY WHILE ITS CONGESTION MITIGATION TARGET WAS 280 PASSENGERS. THE SPRINGFIELD MALL SHUTTLE TRANSPORTS 500 PER DAY, OPERATING AT 55 PERCENT CAPACITY VERSUS A TARGET OF 50 PERCENT. OMNIRIDE'S NEW EXPRESS ROUTE CARRIES 300 AND THE DISCOUNTED WMATA BUS/RAIL PASS IS PURCHASED BY 185 PERSONS PER MONTH, BOTH MEETING THEIR TARGETS. WE BELIEVE THAT THE WILSON BRIDGE PROJECT WOULD BENEFIT FROM A SIMILAR PROGRAM AND REGRET THAT OUR URGENT REQUESTS HAVE GONE UNHEEDED BY THE PROJECT'S SPONSORS.

NVTC ASKS YOU TO CONTINUE TO BALANCE THE PROJECTS YOU APPROVE SO THAT THE ADVANTAGES OF BOTH TRANSIT AND ROADS ARE MAXIMIZED. WE READILY ADMIT THAT OUR TRAFFIC CONGESTION IS BARELY TOLERABLE; THE TEXAS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE MEASURES 46 HOURS OF DELAY PER PERSON PER YEAR IN THE WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA AT A COST OF \$780 PER PERSON. ALTHOUGH OUR TRAFFIC CONGESTION IS THE FOURTH WORST IN THE COUNTRY, OUR TRANSIT AND OTHER ALTERNATIVES TO THE PRIVATE AUTOMOBILE PROVIDE SOME MEASURE OF RELIEF AND DROP US IN RANK TO 31<sup>ST</sup> IN TERMS OF THE BURDEN OF OUR CONGESTION. WITH MORE FUNDING, TRANSIT COULD DO AN EVEN BETTER JOB OF RELIEVING THE BURDEN OF CONGESTION.

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE SPECIFIC REQUESTS WE WOULD ASK YOU TO CONSIDER IN CRAFTING YOUR TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM FOR FY 2002 AND BEYOND:

- 1) BE CERTAIN THAT FUNDS IDENTIFIED FOR PROJECTS IN YOUR APPROVED PLAN ARE NOT SHIFTED AWAY LATER, LEAVING PREVIOUSLY FUNDED PROJECTS IN LIMBO WITH LENGTHY DELAYS IN IMPLEMENTATION.
  
- 2) LIST THE DATES OF EXPECTED BOND ISSUES IN THE PROGRAM AND DO NOT ALLOW VDOT TO SHIFT BOND ISSUE SCHEDULES WITHOUT NOTICE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS THAT DEPEND ON THESE FUNDS FOR VITAL TRANSIT PROJECTS. WE NOTE THAT \$16 MILLION OF BONDS APPROVED FOR WMATA RAILCARS BY THE 1999 GENERAL ASSEMBLY STILL HAVE NOT BEEN ISSUED, AS WELL AS SMALLER BUT VERY IMPORTANT AMOUNTS FOR IMPROVEMENTS AT METRORAIL STATIONS IN ARLINGTON AND ALEXANDRIA. THESE BONDS MUST BE SOLD AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY, SINCE OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS HAVE INCLUDED THESE BOND FUNDS IN THEIR FY 2002 BUDGETS AND

WITHOUT THE FUNDS, THE PROJECTS WILL COME TO AN ABRUPT HALT.

- 3) WE HAVE SUPPORTED WMATA'S REQUEST FOR REPROGRAMMING OF A MULTI-YEAR STREAM OF FUNDS IDENTIFIED IN VTA 2000, ALSO FOR RAILCARS. NVTC WROTE SECRETARY YBARRA IN DECEMBER, 2000 TO ASK FOR THIS SIMPLE CHANGE, BUT HAVE RECEIVED NO RESPONSE. WE STRONGLY SUPPORT THIS CHANGE SINCE WMATA'S PENDING RAILCAR ORDER DEPENDS ON IT.
- 4) WE ALSO URGE YOU TO CONTINUE TO FUND VRE'S TRACK LEASES AND REGIONAL BUS FARE BUYDOWNS, BOTH OF WHICH ARE DELIVERING MEASURABLE IMPROVEMENTS IN RIDERSHIP AND PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR TRANSIT. FUNDS FOR BOTH PROGRAMS SHOULD BE IDENTIFIED IN EACH YEAR OF YOUR SIX-YEAR PLAN TO FACILITATE LOCAL BUDGETING. HOWEVER, VDOT HAS INFORMED US THAT THE \$808,000 TO FUND BUS FARE BUYDOWNS WILL BE PROVIDED FOR FY 2002 FROM OUR OWN DISTRICT'S PRIMARY

ALLOCATION. THE PROGRAM ORIGINATED FROM TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY MARTINEZ'S WRITTEN PROMISE TO COMPENSATE NORTHERN VIRGINIA FOR REDUCED METRORAIL REVENUES DUE TO A VDOT-MANDATED CHANGE IN HOV RESTRICTIONS ON I-66. TO FURTHER PENALIZE OUR REGION BY TAKING THE FUNDS FROM OUR OWN ALLOCATION MAKES A MOCKERY OF THE SECRETARY'S COMMITMENT. YOU SHOULD REVISE THIS UNWISE VDOT PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATION AND OBTAIN THE FUNDS FROM A SOURCE THAT DOES NOT REDUCE THIS REGION'S RESOURCES.

FINALLY, I WISH TO MENTION IN THIS PUBLIC FORUM THAT NVTC'S COMMISSIONERS BELIEVE OUR AGENCY IS PERFORMING ITS MISSION TO FINANCE AND PROMOTE PUBLIC TRANSIT IN A VERY EFFECTIVE MANNER. NVTC AND ITS MEMBERS OFFER A UNIFIED VOICE IN THIS REGION IN FAVOR OF SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENTS IN TRANSIT AND WE TRUST YOU WILL

CONTINUE TO SUPPORT OUR POSITION. WE ARE COOPERATING WITH THE BARRY SUBCOMMITTEE TO EXPLORE THE ROLE OF THE NEW NORTHERN VIRGINIA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY, BUT I MUST EMPHASIZE THAT WE SHOULD ALL EXERCISE GREAT CARE THAT A NEW AUTHORITY DOES NOT DISRUPT THE EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE OF NVTC AND OUR TRANSIT SYSTEMS. AND OF GREATEST IMPORTANCE, THE AUTHORITY CANNOT HELP FIGHT CONGESTION WITHOUT NEW SOURCES OF STABLE AND RELIABLE FUNDING.

THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION AND I WOULD BE PLEASED TO RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS.